

Language contacts in Khwarshi

Khwarshi belongs to the Tsezic branch of the Nakh–Daghestanian language family. Khwarshi, an unwritten language, is one of the minority languages of Daghestan with about 3000 speakers.

The Khwarshi people live in the southeastern part of a mountainous area in the Daghestan Republic. The settlements include Inkhokwari, Kwantlada, Santlada, Khwarshi, and Khwayni. There are five dialects of Khwarshi named after each of these villages. Despite some phonetic and lexical differences, the dialects are mutually intelligible. Geographically, the Khwarshi area adjoins a zone where Andic languages are distributed; in particular, some Khwarshi-speaking villages like Inkhokwari border with Tindi, an Andic language. But the majority of Khwarshi people have emigrated to the lowland villages, where Russian is a predominant language.

The paper will focus on Inkhokwari dialect, which is mostly influenced by the neighboring language from other branch of the family, Tindi, e.g. Inkhokwari dialect has borrowed Andic numeral system, whereas Khwarshi proper has preserved its own numeral system.

Additionally, I will focus on some phenomena, which occur as a result of language contacts with Russian. For instance, contact verbs have an instrument argument marked with the Absolutive case and an animate patient with the Genitive 2, which is used to modify a recoverable body part noun in some oblique case. When the body part is omitted the sentence has an unspecified reference:

1. nartaw-i isulo (laga-λ'a) tɪr haλ-un
giant-ERG that.GEN2 body-SUP sable.ABS stab-PST.UW
'The giant stabbed him with the sable.'

It is also possible to have the instrument argument marked with the Instrumental case (2). This usage of the Instrumental case with contact predicates is compatible to Russian, since instrument arguments are marked with the Instrumental case in Russian:

2. obu-t'-i uža-la k'anta-z l-ek^w-i
father-OBL-ERG boy.OBL-GEN2 stick(IV)-INSTR IV-hit-PST.W
'The father hit the boy with the stick.'

This paper will give an overview to the main contact phenomena in Khwarshi.